

liner material, or as an outer cover in a diaper or other similar product. Webs made according to the present invention are particularly well-suited for these applications due to their fluid handling and control characteristics along with their strength characteristics. In particular, the light basis weight portions of the web will pass fluids to an absorbent material, while the higher basis weight areas provide the necessary strength for such applications.

In the Office Action, independent claims 1, 27 and 35 were all rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being anticipated by Aleman, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,834,735). In response, Applicants respectfully submit that Aleman, et al. fails to disclose or suggest various features of the claimed invention.

Aleman, et al. is directed to the formation of an absorbent member for use in the interior of diapers and similar products. The absorbent member includes a storage zone and an acquisition zone having a lower average density and a lower average basis weight than the storage zone. As stated in column 18, the absorbent member is preferably made by airlaying a thickness profiled absorbent member-preform.

As opposed to the presently pending claims, however, Aleman, et al. fails to disclose or suggest **thermally bonding** the non-woven material together as required in independent claims 1, 27 and 35. Aleman, et al. in column 18 does state that the absorbent member can be calendered to effect densifying the absorbent member. Nowhere, however, does Aleman, et al. disclose, suggest or teach thermally bonding the absorbent member after it has been formed. As such, it is believed that the claims patentably define over Aleman, et al.

In the Office Action, various other references were cited in rejecting some of the currently pending dependent claims. Since these claims further limit and define the invention defined in claims 1, 27 and 35, it is believed that all of the claims further patentably define over the other cited references in the Office Action.

In summary, it is believed that the application is in complete condition for allowance and favorable action, therefore, is respectfully requested. Examiner Pierce is invited and encouraged to telephone the undersigned should any issues remain after consideration of the present response.

Please charge any additional fees required by this Amendment to Deposit Account No. 04-1403.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: November 7, 2002

APPENDIX A

10. (Amended) A nonwoven web as defined in claim 1, wherein said [polymeric] fibers comprise polymeric crimped fibers.
12. (Amended) A nonwoven web as defined in claim 1, wherein said fibers comprise pulp fibers and polymeric fibers.
35. (Amended) A laminate comprising:
- a first layer comprising a substrate; and
- a nonwoven web adhered to said substrate, said nonwoven web having a first end and a second and opposite end, said nonwoven web comprising [pulp fibers or] polymeric fibers, said nonwoven web defining first areas having a first basis weight and second areas having a second basis weight located on said nonwoven web according to a predetermined pattern, said first basis weight being greater than said second basis weight, said first basis weight and said second basis weight ranging from about 0.2 ounces per square yard to about 9 ounces per square yard, the web being compressed and thermally bonded together.